

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for House Resolution 409, honoring the contributions of Catholic Schools. Over two and a half million students are currently enrolled at 8,217 Catholic schools across the country.

This week, as "Catholic Schools Week", provides us an important opportunity to recognize the outstanding performance of Catholic schools in the education of America's youth. I believe their successes truly hold some of the keys to improving our education system nationwide.

Catholic elementary and secondary school students consistently display superior results on national and science academic achievement tests. Catholic schools maintain a phenomenal graduation rate of 95%, compared to 66% for public schools. More importantly, Catholic schools provide their students with a strong sense of their faith, family and community. They provide a rich, intellectually stimulating environment in which today's youth learn the skills required to be tomorrow's leaders.

These schools teach the value of self discipline, tolerance and respect for one another. Catholic schools open their classrooms to economically and culturally diverse students, giving young people of all backgrounds the opportunity to succeed.

I also salute the Catholic school teachers who dedicate themselves to the teaching profession and take great pride in the success of their students.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the sponsors of this resolution, and appreciate the opportunity to honor the Catholic schools of our nation. I believe these schools are a model for success in the education of our youth. I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. MCINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, today Congress passed a resolution congratulating America's Catholic schools, the students, the teachers, and especially the parents, who make many sacrifices to provide their children the education offered in Catholic schools. The outstanding contributions of Catholic schools to our Nation are worthy of celebrating, and as a co-sponsor of that resolution I offer heartfelt congratulations to all who participate in the work of Catholic education. I am especially proud of Catholic schools in Indiana which provide a great education to more than 62,000 children.

This week we celebrate the 26th annual Catholic Schools Week and commemorate the important role Catholic elementary and secondary schools across the country play in providing a values-added education for America's young people. We are proud of their educational network, emphasizing intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social values in their students.

Studies have shown that Catholic schools succeed because they employ a system that works: Site-based management; discipline and virtue; high academic standards, and parental involvement. These qualities contribute to a caring, well-ordered, safe and stimulating environment where children learn more than just academics. They learn individual responsibility, respect, moral conduct, and hard work.

Catholic schools work because they are entirely voluntary for both students and teachers. If students are unhappy, they may leave. Teachers are not tenured. Parents who sacrifice to send their children to school remain involved.

Cicero once said, "There are more men ennobled by study than by nature." However, if we are to ennoble the next generation, we must begin now by inducing positive changes in our education system so more children may have the opportunity to have the rich experience Catholic schools offer. We must introduce more examples of education excellence into the community, to kindle competition and bring excellence to all learning institutions public and private.

At the K-12 level, Indiana spends an average of \$5,666 per student per year. Yet performance declines as the student progresses through the public school system.

For instance, in 1996, Indiana's 4th graders took the National Assessment of Education Progress math exam. They placed 4th out of 43 states that participated in the exam. Which is very good. However, Indiana's 8th graders ranked only 17th out of 43 states. On Math Advanced Placement exams, Indiana ranked last in comparison to other states and the District of Columbia in terms of the percentage of students who scored a 3 or higher out of 5. For Indiana high school students who are college-bound, their SAT scores are about 30 points below the national average. 46th in the nation.

We need to rethink our whole approach to elementary and secondary education. We need to look to examples of education systems which achieve great results so that we can make systemic changes. We also need to provide ways to help parents take advantage of the choices that exist.

Barbara is African-American and lives in inner city Indianapolis. She struggles to raise three boys. And Barbara has decided to become a leader in her community. She is president of a new grassroots organization called FORCE—short for Families Organized for Real Choice in Education.

A few years ago her son, Alphonso, had an opportunity to escape the inner city school system that was failing him. Through a private scholarship program started by Pat Rooney at Golden Rule Insurance Company, Alphonso has been able to attend Holy Cross Catholic School.

It was opportunity that enabled Alphonso to go to a better school. But it was Alphonso's own intellectual abilities and hard work that put him on the honor roll. His own athletic abilities that make him stand out on the football team. And his own leadership abilities that led his classmates to elect Alphonso to the student council.

I could tell you about studies that show the great academic achievements made by inner-city youth in Catholic schools. But Alphonso's success story speaks for itself. His real-life experience tells us so much more than mere statistics ever could. Catholic schools shine just a little brighter when more disadvantaged young people like Alphonso make the grade.

The author Victor Hugo once wrote, "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come." Excellence in education is the course of the future.

We will not let our children—our future—slip through the cracks. Our families will rebuild our education system so that our children grow up with the knowledge and the confidence to build a new day for our nation.

Mr. LARSON. I rise today to acknowledge the contributions made by Catholic schools,

which build strong educational and moral foundations for our students.

As a former student of St. Rose's School in East Hartford, Connecticut, I would like to praise the outstanding efforts of the Sisters of Notre Dame for providing students with strong academic and moral values. My Catholic school education has given me a valuable framework for life, and has enabled me to achieve personal and professional goals.

Our nation's Catholic schools provide excellent opportunities for learning. With over 8,000 schools and current matriculating classes of greater than 2.6 million students (of which one-in-four are minorities), Catholic schools provide educational opportunities to a broad cross-section of our society. These schools encourage greater levels of student-teacher interaction through their small class-size ratio. As a result, Catholic school students achieve a graduation rate of 95%, while 83% continue on to a college education. This education model has been internationally acclaimed for its stellar academic reputation.

As we celebrate Catholic School Week, I am proud that these schools will continue to nurture students dedicated to their faith, to their values, to their communities and to their families. These schools develop the leaders of tomorrow with effective leadership and character. I am, therefore, proud to support H. Res. 409.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 409.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 409.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

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TAIWAN SECURITY ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 408 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 408

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 1838) to assist in the enhancement of the security of Taiwan, and for other purposes. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. The amendment